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ABSTRACT

This report examines the Ford Foundation's efforts in developing and implementing alternative schools to the public schools or in providing seed money to new alternatives designed for public support. The publication begins with a look at the origin of the alternative school movement and then describes several kinds of school alternatives assisted by the Foundation in recent years, such as the Philadelphia Parkway Program, a school without walls; the East Harlem Block Schools, two day-care centers and a private elementary school scattered in three large storefronts in different locations; and the Massachusetts Experimental School System, established as a model for other school systems in the State. The Foundation advocates public funding as the long-term solution to the question of survival for most alternative schools. (Photographs may reproduce poorly.) (Author/DN)

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Matters of Choice

A FORD FOUNDATION REPORT ON ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

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Public education is evolving from a system of schools to a network of options. The educational system will become an umbrella of alternatives: free schools, traditional schools, camps, job corps centers, ethnic programs. When I first started speaking of a "network" to the Berkeley Board of Education, they were terrified of the idea. Now they're beginning to use the term themselves.

– Richard L. Foster, Former Superintendent, Berkeley Unified School District

There have always been alternatives to traditional public schools, ranging from private schools, religious schools, and reform schools to the ultimate alternative of no school at all. In the 1960s parent-controlled "free" schools proliferated around the nation, providing alternatives for some middle-class dropouts. Storefront schools and street academies, supported by businesses and philanthropic organizations, provided alternatives for some inner-city youth who had given up on—or been given up by—the public schools. Despite these alternatives, the idea of providing schooling options had low priority among educational reformers until the early 1970s.

Today, the range of alternative schools is wide and diverse. Private academies like Harlem Prep send inner-city dropouts to major universities.* Within public systems, schools-without-walls like the Parkway Program in Philadelphia use an entire city as a classroom. Publicly-supported community schools like the Morgan School in Washington, D.C., actively involve parents in the education of their children. Alternative schools take such forms as mini-schools, multicultural schools, ethnic schools, student-directed schools, parent-directed schools, open schools, and units within traditional schools.

Some alternative schools are part of federally supported experiments—for example, the system of twenty-three alternatives in Berkeley, California. The Massachusetts Experimental School System is a state-supported effort to provide a model for alternative education. Many alternatives are tax-supported schools that depart from traditional educational methods while remaining part of the local public school system. Other alternatives are privately supported schools that barely survive by scrambling for corporate and foundation dollars.

*Harlem Prep has now become part of the publicly-supported New York schools; see page 31.

Origins

The alternative school movement has many roots, including the "free school" movement and experiments with more effective educational approaches. Voucher programs, performance contracts, and community control have also contributed to the development of alternative schools.

Most *voucher proposals* call for granting each child in a community a "chit" or "voucher" worth a specified amount of education—for example, one year's worth of schooling. The parents can then spend their voucher on any educational activity they choose, including traditional public schooling. Most voucher programs assume that several educational alternatives will be available to parents. If certain alternatives are more popular with parents and students than others, then the former will grow and the latter decline. *Performance contracts* generally entail hiring an agency outside the school to teach a specified subject or skill to the students. In theory, the agency is paid only if the students reach an agreed level of performance in that subject or skill, thus fulfilling the contract.

Both vouchers and performance contracts are based on the premise that schools and school systems should be accountable for the quality of education they provide. If the schools don't provide quality education, then parents should be able to discard them and choose other methods of education or other schools that will perform better. *Community-supported* schools often spring from the same desire for accountability: if the public schools can't teach their children, then parents have

Courses in New York's public City-as-School take place outside school walls, as in a local radio station. In addition to working on shows, students get experience in less glamorous aspects of radio station operation—running the switchboard and checking subscriptions, for example.

a right to operate schools which can. In short, the idea of alternative schools is based on the right to choose.

Alternative schools have also risen from the ashes of past attempts at school reform. In the 1960s the federal government, private foundations, corporations, and community groups poured massive amounts of money and energy into efforts to change the public school system. The gloomy statistics documenting the shortcomings of public schools in the education of minority students highlighted the poor fit between school offerings and the needs and goals of many students.

These large-scale efforts failed to produce large-scale changes, partly because it is so difficult to make a dent in the public school system. It bends, absorbs, and springs back into its original form.* Moreover, many of the reforms attacked the problem from the top down. They sought to change teachers and curricula without focusing enough on the day-to-day political and community life of the school. Even these modest reforms threatened some educators. "We used to train teachers and then bring them back into the schools," said former Berkeley Superintendent Richard Foster, "and they wouldn't be allowed to try out the new techniques they had learned. The schools prevented them from making changes. They were afraid."

Beginning in the late 1960s, the Ford Foundation assisted efforts at a new kind of reform involving smaller, more experimental, more tentative efforts to improve education. At first, these efforts centered on privately financed alternative schools. However, private alternative schools are often unstable. Even though they spend a disproportionate amount of time raising money, their average lifespan has been only eighteen months. Although no Constitutional barrier exists to spending public funds on private nonsectarian schools, legislative and political inhibitions usually prevent such expenditures. Because the overwhelming majority of children attend public schools, private schools have little political constituency to assist in gaining tax dollars.

The Foundation's efforts at assisting alternative schools have therefore focused on public schools or on providing seed money to new alternatives designed for public support. These experiments are testing a variety of ideas in structural arrangements, curricula, and parent and student involvement. Some Foundation-assisted alternatives are still struggling for survival. Just as privately supported alternatives are at the mercy of foundation and private grants, so publicly supported alternatives are subject to changes of political climate. Some educators fear that the mood is increasingly hostile to experimentation. "It's easy to kill an alternative," said Byron Stookey, former project director of one alternative agency in New York, the Committee for a Comprehensive Education Center. "If somebody wants to show that you've screwed up, they probably can—because you probably have." Traditional public school programs too fail to bring many students to respectable achievement levels, but alternatives are more vulnerable because their mistakes are more visible.

It is precisely because of their ability to correct mistakes and to respond rapidly and directly to the needs of their constituencies that alternatives have gained strength and cohesion. Although much of this report addresses the common problems and

*The Ford Foundation alone contributed more than $30 million in the 1960s for a Comprehensive School Improvement Program designed to develop innovative strategies for teacher training, curriculum design, and better utilization of staff, technology and facilities. In 1972, Colorado educator Paul Nachtigal conducted a study for the Foundation on the results of the ten-year effort. "This experience again pointed out," he said, "the difficulty of changing a very entrenched system which apparently has an endless capacity to absorb efforts designed to improve its operation." (*A Foundation Goes to School, The Ford Foundation Comprehensive School Improvement Program 1960-1970*, available on request.)

failures that alternatives share as innovative social forms, the overall record is of success and vitality in providing a wide range of educational experiences and options.

Questions and Outcomes

Alternative schools are unique experimental laboratories which are beginning to address some of the most profound questions in education. What is a "learning experience," and how does one evaluate it? Can parents play a meaningful role in their children's education, and if so, what is it? How much freedom and responsibility can students handle? How important is the study of a child's cultural and ethnic heritage to his learning? How important are teacher training, facilities, materials?

Alternatives must struggle with these questions more intensely than most public schools because their survival depends on their ability to attract and hold students. The alternatives have given validity to a new kind of grass-roots educational reform. People not only choose alternatives, but tune them to community needs through an often agonizing process of experimentation.

Some critics contend that the school alternatives hardly constitute a movement because so few students are involved. In New York, for example, a few thousand students are enrolled in alternative programs out of a total city enrollment of more than 1.1 million. However, in Berkeley, California, one-fourth of the children attend public alternative schools. The Philadelphia public school system offers more than sixty experimental alternative programs. In California, the state legislature recently passed a bill authorizing the conversion of four school districts into networks of alternative schools. This year, the New York City Board of Education organized an Independent Alternative Schools Committee, composed of the directors of the city's eleven independent alternatives. In addition, New York is setting up a resources and information center for the city's thirty "mini" alternatives that operate within regular high schools. Almost every large high school in the city has requested funds to support an alternative school within or associated with the school.

Supporters of alternative schools include the National Institute of Education, local community groups, and education reformers of almost every philosophical bent. The National Consortium for Options in Public Education, with headquarters at Indiana University, estimates that alternative schools are being planned, developed, or operated in more than one thousand U.S. communities. The number of alternative public schools in operation may be as high as 1,200 with a total enrollment of 100,000. While these numbers are small compared to total enrollments in our public schools, they testify to a growing movement, not a languishing experiment.

How do the students who attend alternative schools fare? Where standard measures of achievement such as test scores and college admissions are applicable, they show that alternative school students perform at least as well as their counterparts in traditional school programs, and usually better. Attendance rates almost without exception exceed those in regular schools.

Even alternative schools that cite better student-teacher rapport as their major achievement cannot be considered failures. They give many students a second chance to get the education they missed in traditional public schools, whether they were fast learners who were bored with traditional school or slow learners who were left behind. Thus, if alternative schools are, as some educators contend, dumping grounds for students the traditional public schools don't want, they are also refuges where the dumped can learn.

Following are descriptions of several kinds of school alternatives assisted by the Ford Foundation in recent years.

Schools Without Walls

The schools-without-walls concept challenges the traditional definition of school. Many people receive as much schooling on the job or on the street as they do in buildings formally designated as schools. Indeed, many of the demands for "relevance" in education stem from the artificial division between school as a place and schooling as a process of learning.

Business, government, social problems, and the arts are integral parts of daily life in a city. Learning about such subjects in a traditional school often seems irrelevant and boring when so much is happening outside. In addition, many frustrated teachers and students (along with some authorities on learning research) are discovering that a fast and efficient way to learn something is to do it.

Schools-without-walls differ widely in staffing, curricula, and the proportion of time students spend outside of the school building. Typically, students take at least some of their courses as community internships or outreach activities that involve studying a subject at a site outside of the school itself. For example, a student interested in health receives instruction in a hospital or medical center. Schools-without-walls rely heavily on community specialists such as doctors, hospital technicians, or medical students to provide on-site instruction.

The major difficulties encountered by schools-without-walls are the recruitment of qualified and dedicated on-site instructors and the evaluation of on-site instruction. Moreover, students in schools-without-walls assume considerable responsibility for their own scheduling, choice of courses, attendance, and conduct. Not all students—especially those who need extensive remedial help—are equipped for so much independence. On the other hand, many students who perform poorly in traditional classroom settings renew interest in academic studies and gain the confidence to progress rapidly in schools-without-walls.

The Parkway Model

The "classrooms" of Philadelphia's Parkway Program spread out from the two-mile-long Benjamin Franklin Parkway, the site of many of Philadelphia's scientific and cultural institutions. The entire city is both Parkway's campus and its curriculum. The program has no school building as such. Classes are held in city and state facilities, hospitals, businesses and educational institutions, private homes, churches, and offices. Parkway's 850 students work out of four units in different parts of the city. Each unit has a meeting place and ten full-time accredited teachers plus some university interns. This staff teaches about half of the courses—mostly basic curriculum such as reading, math, social studies, and science—and supervises weekly tutorials. Community volunteers with special skills offer on-site programs and internships in academic, commercial, and vocational subjects. A Parkway student may study science at a nature center, creative writing at the University of Pennsylvania, law and justice at City Hall, library skills at the Philadelphia public library, office procedures at a bank, mechanics at a local auto body shop.

Parkway is a fully accredited public alternative operated and funded by the School District of Philadelphia. It is open to all the city's high school students, to students in private and parochial schools, to a limited number of suburban children, and to dropouts. Out of some 52,000 high school students in Philadelphia, more than 2,000 apply for the 200 spaces available at Parkway each year. Seventy-five per cent of Parkway's students are chosen by lottery, and 25 per cent are referred by their local high schools to achieve a racial, economic, and geographic balance.

One of Parkway's main selling points is that despite its low pupil-teacher ratio, its costs are the same as the city's standard per-pupil expenditure. Expensive school space is not needed, and the use of community volunteers eliminates the need for

additional staff. Yet the project has encountered some problems in almost every sphere of its operation: political, financial, staff, students, community resources, parents, and curriculum. Parkway has changed significantly since it opened in 1969.

"In the beginning," says Robert C. Hutchins, Parkway's director, "some people thought Parkway was a school for white counterculture kids and black inner-city kids." Some of the students were destructive. Where this happened, community resources were difficult to retain.

"The kids got more room to explore and sometimes didn't know how to handle it," Hutchins observes. "Other kids expected to succeed where they hadn't before and got hung up on not being graded. Some parents still are afraid of alternatives. They're afraid that their kids aren't getting basic skills, and at first we were very weak in that area. Furthermore, the teachers wanted to teach on a high intellectual plane. They weren't equipped for remedial work and the many demands placed on a Parkway teacher: counselling, guidance, training interns, liaison with outside institutions, finding space for courses, teaching courses, keeping in contact with parents, administrative work, and tutorials."

Some black groups attacked Parkway, arguing that some of the community resources it used were precisely those white, middle-class institutions that blacks had been distant from in the past. They saw Parkway as a program for bright, white suburban intellectuals. Meanwhile, other career-oriented programs began competing with Parkway for business cooperation in providing internships for students. Too many programs were knocking on the doors of private business, and some programs were willing to pay business for the kind of training that Parkway sought for free.

In recent years, Parkway has begun to look more to service-oriented institutions for community internships such as the Urban League and city social agencies. Today, about one-half of Parkway's community internships are in the public sector and the other half with private businesses.

Parkway's original director, John Bremer, envisioned a full-blown alternative high school of 2,400 students, but the school system never endorsed such a grand plan. "We don't need a bigger Parkway," says Hutchins, "we need alternative alternatives." The school system has started to increase the number of Parkway units. In September 1974, a fifth unit will open. The system also is encouraging the development of other alternative programs attached to traditional schools.

Partly as a result of a Foundation-funded evaluation by the Organization for Social and Technical Innovation (OSTI), Parkway strengthened its teaching of basic skills and introduced some standardized testing. Teacher hiring, in which students as well as parents and staff participate, became more uniform. And the program has put more emphasis on students' responsibilities for meeting their commitments. "We have to show that we're doing what we said we'd do," says Hutchins. "For example, we said we'd increase attendance and we did. A lot of that is due to peer pressure. The kids know Parkway is being closely watched and they want it to succeed."

Colleges recruit at Parkway, Robert Hutchins believes, because its students are prepared for taking responsibility. More than 60 per cent of Parkway's graduates go on to college, compared with 40 per cent in other comprehensive Philadelphia high schools. More than 10,000 schools and other educational institutions have requested information about various aspects of Parkway's operation. Moreover, approximately 5,000 Philadelphia students are now enrolled in public alternative programs under the auspices of the Alternative Programs Office, funded in part by the Foundation. The Parkway Program has truly become a model, breaking ground for public alternatives in general as well as for schools-without-walls.

City-as-School (C-a-S)

Parkway's certified staff itself teaches about 85 per cent of the program's basic education courses, and the rest are taught by community instructors. New York's City-as-School is entirely external. Except for eight licensed teachers who function mainly as counselors, resource coordinators, and evaluators, all of the C-a-S teaching staff of some fifty are volunteer community experts. Classes take place in the New York offices of Congressmen, the Manhattan School of Music, Hurwitz Real Estate and Insurance, the League of Women Voters, the Parks Department, newspaper and television offices, the Zoological Society, museums, libraries, day-care centers, the United Federation of Teachers, Good Housekeeping Magazine, the Statue of Liberty, and the United Nations—to name a few. Courses in English, mathematics, social studies and science are offered through Brooklyn College and Polytechnic Institute. C-a-S is an independent alternative public high school funded by the New York City school system. The students—juniors and seniors who have completed their math and science requirements—receive diplomas both from C-a-S and from their home high school.

City-as-School was designed during the spring of 1972 with the aid of a grant from the Ford Foundation. Students joined in the planning process. One team of students wrote letters to hundreds of cultural, civic, labor, and business organizations to enlist them as resources. They followed up with personal visits, appealing both to civic pride and to a *quid pro quo* whereby businesses would receive public good will in return for providing student internships. Other students carried on recruiting in high school cafeterias and friends' homes to enroll fellow students in the program. Another student group designed courses which students could pursue independently without going to class.

In 1974, City-as-School had 200 students (30 per cent from minority groups). It does not plan to go much above 300. The director is Frederick Koury, formerly head of the English department of New York's innovative John Dewey High School and an active member of the United Federation of Teachers. Drawing in part from Parkway's experience, C-a-S never concentrated on private business as a primary source for community resources. Businesses, more than other agencies, tended to use students for trivial chores rather than providing them with significant work-training experience.

Disagreeing with the formlessness of many free schools, Koury wants to use New York City's vast resources in a structured way. While City-as-School students choose their own courses and sometimes even design them, the need for meeting high school diploma requirements is constantly stressed. Students can prepare for New York State Regents examinations as independent study projects with assistance from the C-a-S staff. Every tenth week of classes is set aside for seminars and evaluations. Courses are not graded, but each student must write an evaluation of his experience. Once a student has chosen a course, he must attend regularly and punctually. The program has dress codes appropriate to the location of the resource. The C-a-S student handbook recognizes that even planning lunch hours will be a new problem for most students and lists inexpensive places to eat.

City-as-School has had its share of problems. The staff lacked time to visit all the resource sites before classes began, and some were disasters. A few students were overcome by the openness and responsibility thrust on them and returned to their regular high schools. C-a-S also had trouble recruiting students. Parents were afraid that outside experiences wouldn't be structured enough. There was also some resistance from the traditional high schools. "Principals lost some kids they wanted to lose," said Koury, "but they also lost some kids they wanted to keep." Some students needed remedial skills, which C-a-S did not provide the first year.

An advisory committee of New York City high school principals is helping C-a-S teachers to develop evaluation criteria for the program. "We're committed to move this entire school in the direction of an educational laboratory," says Koury. "It's a huge job." But Koury planned well for the challenge of City-as-School by keeping in touch with Parkway and other schools-without-walls programs. In fact, the C-a-S student and parent handbooks are almost identical to Parkway's handbooks.

In 1972, after initial support by the Foundation, City-as-School was incorporated into the New York City public school system and is now supported entirely by the Board of Education. Student attendance has averaged around 90 per cent. Of the eighteen students who graduated in June 1973, fourteen are now in college. Twenty-seven more students graduated in January 1974 and every one plans to attend college in September.

The least successful part of City-as-School's first year was the attempt to use student-designed courses. Contracts were to be drawn up which specified the nature and objectives of a project. Students and advisors were then to agree on the steps necessary to reach that goal. For example, the goal of a contract might be that a student learn about New York City's art museums. The steps to achieve that goal would be specified in the contract—books to be read, people to be interviewed, sites to be visited, perhaps a student project such as the establishment of a school museum. The contracts did not work well because the staff had too little time to monitor them, according to Frederick Koury. Complex as they are, however, student-designed contracts play a part in almost every school-without-walls.

Other Approaches

Other Foundation-assisted projects have used the school-without-walls approach with varying success. Park East High School in New York places great emphasis on student internships (see page 29, Growing an Alternative School). But where Parkway and C-a-S use unpaid volunteer help as community instructors, the collaborating teachers at Park East are considered part of the regular staff. They are paid on the same scale as regular teachers and are expected to teach courses both in the community and in the school. For example, a computer training program utilizes IBM teachers and equipment both in the school and at other sites. IBM donated the equipment but Park East pays the teachers. Community internships are a required part of the curriculum for every Park East student. Regular teachers at Park East are expected to spend time in the field with their students, supervising and evaluating activities.

The Massachusetts Experimental School System (see page 26) also pays its community teachers, who include professional teachers, business people, government employees, and graduate students.

Communities and Schools*

The often controversial movement for community participation in education is the result of many converging forces in American life. As the educational bureaucracy has mushroomed, parents have become increasingly distant from the powers that control the education of their children. This problem is often most severe in minority neighborhoods where the least adequate public schools are usually found. In these neighborhoods community participation is sometimes perceived as a way to improve the quality of education. The problem is further aggravated because public school teachers and administrators are predominantly white.

There is some confusion in the terminology regarding relations between schools and their communities. Community-*controlled* schools—where parents have power over teacher selection, evaluation of teachers and curricula, and finances—cannot by definition be part of a public school system because in most communities power over such matters is shared by boards of education, administrators, and teachers' organizations. Thus, it is extremely difficult for community-controlled schools to successfully solicit public funds. Yet there are public as well as nonpublic schools where all elements of the community—children, adults, and community organizations as well as teachers and administrators—participate widely.

Whether the parental role is participation or control, it is a difficult, continuous problem to sustain parental participation in non-crisis periods. Too often, a small core group of parents assumes total responsibility. In ethnically mixed community schools, white parents who are better schooled in organization tend to participate more than minority parents.

Community participation also entails some sophistication among parents about how to run a school. Often, in the neighborhoods where community participation is most wanted, the parents, lacking spare time and educational background, are least sophisticated. Therefore, some community schools have turned to outside experts for assistance, often to be disappointed because the experts were more interested in implementing abstract educational concepts than in fitting school programs to community needs.

Perhaps the most promising aspect of community schools is how much parents have become involved in the day-to-day education of their children. Often, parents teach in the schools and earn high school or college degrees while they are teaching, thereby building self-esteem in both the parents and their children. Because parents help hire teachers in community schools, the teachers' accountability for the quality of education is shared by teachers and parents. Education becomes a cooperative effort between parents and teachers.

Whether community schools will proliferate around the country is doubtful because of the many political and financial obstacles. But community schools have given validity to parental contributions and spurred interest in parent participation in regular public schools among teachers and administrators as well as parents.

Parents as Participants

East Harlem Block Schools is a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation licensed by the New York State Department of Social Welfare. It consists of two

*During 1967 and 1968, the Foundation made grants to assist planning in three experimental New York City school districts that had been authorized by the Board of Education. Local governing boards in these districts were given expanded powers to reduce growing school-community alienation and improve education. The projects generated controversy, primarily because of ambiguity concerning the delegation of powers to the community boards, and the dispute contributed to a prolonged teachers strike. In 1969, the New York State legislature voted to decentralize the entire city school system into thirty-one districts where elected local boards are empowered to make at least some educational decisions and to govern elementary and middle schools in their districts.

Roxbury Community School's program is constructed not only to equip children with the skills necessary to stimulate future learning but also to enhance feelings of security and attachment to their community and fellow students.

day-care centers and a private elementary school scattered in three large storefronts in different locations. All are totally controlled by parents. Some of the pupils were considered behavioral problems in New York City public schools. A few were second-grade truants. One was expelled from nursery school. Here, the kids appear happy and active, and most of them go quietly about their business.

The block schools began with a tutoring program in 1963, expanded to a nursery in 1965, and opened its first elementary school in 1967. Children were admitted on a first-come, first-served basis with siblings given preference so the school can work with families.

The schools grew as their students grew. By 1972, the first nursery students had reached the sixth grade and the schools needed to expand. The younger children were in self-contained classes, each with one teacher, one parent-teacher, and a maximum of twenty-two children. But the teachers and parents felt that the fifth and sixth graders presented such a wide range of ability and maturity that a new approach was needed. Feeling isolated, the teachers wanted to try out a team-teaching approach where two or more teachers share responsibility for two or more classes, allowing each teacher to specialize in one or more areas. The Ford Foundation granted funds for planning the new upper school. In the fall of 1972, the first combined fifth and sixth grade class opened with forty-five students and five teachers, two of whom were parents.

The schools are run by a board made up of one non-staff parent from each class plus five at-large members, some of whom work in the school. The board's personnel committee has complete control over hiring; they interview teachers and observe them in classroom situations before they are hired. "The fact that teachers are accountable to the parents and to the kids," says Tom Roderick (former director and now a teacher), "makes a big difference in how the teachers feel about the school. They are much more open to parents because the parents hired them."

Each class has a parent co-teacher—a job that doesn't require a high school diploma. High school equivalency courses and a college training program are offered to parent co-teachers. Every co-teacher takes some kind of training during the day or after school in subjects ranging from math to English composition to child development. The Bank Street College teaches some of the courses, for which the co-teachers receive undergraduate credit toward a college degree from Empire State College. Bank Street also video-tapes the teachers so they can watch themselves and each other in a classroom situation.

Other parents just drop in to see how their children are progressing. Their presence makes the school much more like an extension of home. Federal funds pay for such family services as screening children for dental, hearing, sight, and speech difficulties. When necessary, a parent coordinator from the school accompanies parents to the welfare office or to clinics. Once a month, teachers get together with parents to show slides of the children in class and conduct sample lessons so the parents can keep up with the curriculum.

This parent-teacher effort is succeeding. According to results of the Stanford reading achievement test, given to six graders in the fall of 1972 and again in spring 1973, the students gained 1.8 years—that is, a full additional year of learning for eight months of schooling.

The East Harlem Block Schools receive some federal funds but most of their support comes in small grants from numerous foundations and corporations, from private fund-raising efforts, and from public mailings. The parents, many of whom are on welfare, hold raffles, rummage sales, cake sales, and dances to raise money. "The only long-range hope for schools like this is a public fund-

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ing," says Roderick. "But that might mean we'd have to give up some control over teacher hiring."

Costs at the East Harlem Block Schools are comparable to those in an average New York City elementary school. Facilities and high salaries are traded off to pay for more teachers. Small class size is essential for the program's success and would be impossible if the schools had to use public school salary schedules. The schools are now trying to work out cooperative trade-offs with the public school system that might give the block schools some semblance of stable support. For example, the schools could conduct workshops for public school teachers and paraprofessionals or take on students having a difficult time in public schools.

School as a Community Center

The residents of the Morgan community in northwest Washington, D. C., three-fourths of whom are welfare recipients, are bent on proving that a good public school can offer much to a low-income community. The Morgan Community School has public funds, but its road has not been uniformly smooth. A proposal for community control of the school was finally accepted by the District of Columbia Board of Education in 1967, with little of the political turmoil that accompanied similar efforts in other cities. The new community school board allowed the existing staff to remain or to transfer. The teaching staff at Morgan was racially integrated. There was no racial friction at the inception of community control primarily because of the support of the Washington Teachers' Union.

Morgan's agreement with the D.C. School Board gave Antioch College broad powers over teaching, staffing, and curriculum. The partnership turned out to be short and bitter. "Universities make commitments they can't keep," said Morgan principal John H. Anthony. "Antioch said the kids could learn without a totally structured program. They tried to use a lot of free-school methods which didn't work. The parents had to come in to establish control, to help kids to learn." Teachers, students, and parents were unprepared for the freedom in the unstructured approach the Antioch team advocated. The teachers didn't get as much help as they wanted. The parents wanted a quiet, traditional approach that would quickly raise reading and math levels. Many parents thought Antioch was using Morgan as a laboratory school to conduct educational experiments.

Today, some of Antioch's methods are being used successfully at Morgan. For example, the school uses differentiated teaching staff—trading off the salaries of some highly paid certified teachers to get greater numbers of lower-paid community nonprofessionals. Like the East Harlem Block School teachers, Morgan's paraprofessionals are community residents whose children attend the school and who train themselves for new careers while providing a link between community and school. Some interns do secretarial work and others teach. They enable the school to keep its pupil-teacher ratio down to about 15 to 1.

Morgan tries to take its cues from the community on curriculum, discipline, and other matters. The 700-pupil school is governed by an elected local board of seven parents, three community representatives, three young adults (ages 16-24), and two staff representatives, one professional and one community paraprofessional. "We aren't going to be satisfied until 100 per cent of the parents are involved," says Anthony. However, parental participation, largely a middle-class concept, has been a problem. The school counselor managed to see only 100 parents last year. Some parents drop in to help out or to relieve teachers, but most of the work is done by a small core. Only about forty or fifty people attend regular board meetings.

"Community control at Morgan was originally a white idea supported by a few black parents," says

Robert Brown, chairman of Morgan's school board. "We have to develop some political and economic sophistication before we can use community control effectively." Brown wants to get away from the rhetoric of community control and deal with practical implications. Morgan holds workshops for board members on policy-making, parents attend workshops on educational methods and techniques, and the U.S. Office of Education provides a full-time parent consultant. "We have to establish what we want to teach and why," says Brown. "You can talk about black studies, for example, but you have to define what that means. We do a lot of talking about meeting community needs but we have to specify them. In this community, one major problem is alcoholism. The school should be equipped to deal with that."

Morgan wants to take the school out into the community as well as bringing the community into the school. Morgan provides field trips—a common activity in middle-class schools but a rare luxury for ghetto students. Older pupils take two to four trips every month to national monuments, parks, lumber yards, farms, and foreign embassies. A grant from the Ford Foundation enabled Morgan to rent two mini-buses, which have taken students and teachers to Boston, Philadelphia and New York. While the staff visited schools in search of new ideas, the pupils saw the sights.

Morgan is open at night and on weekends to provide services for children and adults. Courses are offered in sewing, high school equivalency, typing, driver education, creative dance, physical fitness, and community beautification. Morgan also runs a small center equipped with a few washing machines and sewing machines, a storefront nature center, and a combination community thrift shop, bike shop, and film developing center. Originally, it was hoped that these community enterprises would bring in some money for the school, but so far they are barely staying alive.

The school has big plans for the future. Construction has started on a new $10 million school building to be completed in 1975. It will house 1,200 students and a great variety of community facilities, including a 600-seat gymnasium-auditorium, a home arts center for both students and adults, a medical center, a welfare office, a birth control center, a food stamp distribution center, rehabilitation services, legal aid services, round-the-clock day-care, and a community swimming pool. Meanwhile, plans call for courses at the construction site for fifth and sixth graders.

As one of the country's few publicly funded community schools, Morgan is fortunate in not having to worry about day-to-day expenses. Funds raised locally go mainly for special projects and community activities. The issue of busing for racial integration has never come up seriously. "We want Morgan to be so good that people in Bethesda will want to send their children here," says Anthony. Morgan's first principal, Dr. Kenneth Haskins, was appointed vice superintendent of schools for the District of Columbia in 1973. He is cautiously optimistic that the board of education will approve a plan to further decentralize the District of Columbia school system.

Home as School and School as Home

One of the most frequently discussed issues in education in recent years is how much factors outside the school influence learning. The Federation of Boston Community Schools has based much of its work on the premise that it is possible to bring home and school together, "that you can use outside factors to reinforce school learning," said former Federation director Philip Hart.

The Federation grew out of three small community schools in the Roxbury and North Dorchester sections of Boston—areas marked by poverty and some of the most inadequate public schools in the city. The attitude of Boston's all-white board of

education, according to Hart, seemed to be that there was something wrong with the children, not with the schools. In 1966, parents opened the New School for Children. Within two years other parent groups organized the Roxbury Community School and the Highland Park Free School. By 1969, the schools were $228,000 in debt. The Ford Foundation paid off the debt and granted the Federation $550,000 over the next three years on two conditions: that $200,000 could be raised from other sources and that the schools federate for fund-raising purposes. The rest of the money was raised from the Associated Foundations of Greater Boston.

In 1973, some 400 children attended kindergarten through eighth grade in the Federation schools. Each professional administrator works in a team with a parent administrator. Each certified teacher works in a team with a parent or community teacher. The community teachers are hired with the agreement that they will pursue their studies at degree-granting institutions through the Federal Career Opportunities Program. Since the schools opened, some fifteen community and parent teachers have received B.A. degrees from local universities. The children, some perhaps for the first time, see their parents and community people in positions of leadership and responsibility.

Parents make all major administrative decisions in the schools, including admission of students, hiring of personnel, fund-raising, curriculum, and lunch room and library operation. The schools provide a training ground for community people who want new careers as secretaries, janitors, receptionists, fund raisers, health workers, and cooks. They increase not only their earning power but also their expectations and their children's expectations.

Standardized tests indicate that the children in the Federation schools perform slightly above the national norm, and far above the average for Boston public schools.

Almost since the Federation schools opened they have used an open classroom model. The rooms are divided into noisy areas and quiet areas. Children work on many activities in small groups at the same time. Black studies are also an important part of the curriculum. The children celebrate birthdays of black leaders and anniversaries of important events in black history. Teachers keep up to date through curriculum workshops. The students are in mixed, flexible age groups where each can proceed at his or her own pace.

In 1972, the Roxbury Community School began to use the school's model of education as a marketable commodity to produce income for the Federation through workshops, consulting, and other services. The school set up a resource center where public school teachers from surrounding areas came to look at demonstrations of classroom techniques or to participate in workshops. Occasionally, the visiting teachers brought their classes with them. The resource center often loaned or gave away materials used in the Roxbury schools. Unfortunately, the Roxbury School resource center burned to the ground in 1973.

The Federation has had other bad luck. At the end of 1972, the New School, first of the three, floundered and died. Staff turnover had been high and administration was extremely unstable. In 1968, when the New School needed to expand, it moved from Roxbury to a new building in the adjoining community of North Dorchester. "For some reason," said Philip Hart, "the parents there just weren't interested in community-controlled schools." The New School was also uneconomical. Falling enrollments had left it with a small number of students (200) compared to its large physical plant. Like other schools in the Federation, the New School was threatened with eviction more than once because of violation of city building codes. When the building was finally condemned, the Federation voted to close the New School and absorb its pupils into the remaining two schools.

(over) Parkway "school without walls" students gather for an experiment in physics at one of their "campuses"—the Schuylkill River. The ability to use facilities throughout Philadelphia gives Parkway access to rich resources in people and learning materials.

The Federation faced other problems common to community-controlled schools. Parental participation was not always high. In the beginning outside institutions used the schools as laboratories for educational experimentation without regard for the specific requirements of the community. "One of our main problems is that the parents tend to be anti-professional," said Joseph P. Williams, the new director of the Federation. "They jumped into things they don't know how to do—like writing legal contracts—which just hurt them in the end. We were handling a $500,000 budget as if it were one family's finances. But when we brought in an accountant, the parents were suspicious."

Federation schools have become strong community institutions, providing comprehensive medical and dental care through community health centers. The facilities are used by other groups. Adults are invited to eat lunch and breakfast at the schools at reasonable rates. Through the Federation, the schools share resources, lunchroom programs, health and social services, and teacher training programs.

Funds from the Ford Foundation and the Associated Foundations of Greater Boston have provided more than 45 per cent of the Federation's budget for the past three years. Now that those grants are depleted, the Federation is in a precarious position. Local fund-raising has been good considering the stark poverty of the Federation's immediate area. The schools manage to raise about $30,000 annually, or about 5 per cent of the total budget. Thought has been given to a school-operated business to bring in money, but even at a profit margin of 1 per cent per year, the business would have to clear $70 million to support the Federation's budget.

Since the schools charge no tuition and have no admission requirements, the Federation hoped that they could be eligible for public funds. The schools have always had a long waiting list. Students are selected primarily by geographical proximity. However, the possibility of working out any arrangement with the Boston public schools seems remote. "The Boston School Committee is not responsive," said Hart. "The reason the Federation can't get money today is the same reason the schools were started in the first place."

The Federation was hopeful about merging with the Massachusetts Experimental School System (see page 26), but the Massachusetts experimental project itself has come under fire because of its racially unbalanced student body. About 60 per cent of its students are black, and merger with the Federation would only worsen that situation.

Private sources have pledged $100,000 conditional on matching funds from other sources for a Federation proposal to establish a network of public and private schools to share resources and stimulate racial integration. But to survive in the long run, the Federation needs public funds. Unless a change in the political climate makes this possible, the Federation will continue to need private support. "We used to tell foundations that in three years we would have public funding and be on our feet," said Williams. "Now we can't promise anything. We can only try and wait and see."

Mixed Results

Community control in an all-black neighborhood is one thing. Involving parents of different races is quite another. Three Foundation-assisted programs in integrated neighborhoods have experimented with community control and have come up with somewhat mixed results in achieving parental participation.

Berkeley, California, has a reputation for innovation. In 1968, the city voluntarily desegregated its entire public school system. Today, Berkeley public schools enroll more than 14,000 students: 45 per cent are white, 44 per cent are black, 6 per cent are of Asian descent, and 3 per cent are Chi-

cano. Both federal and foundation dollars have supported educational experiments in Berkeley. (see page 21.)

Almost all of the twenty-three federally supported experimental schools in Berkeley, California are controlled by some kind of parent-community board. White parents participate in school activities far more than do black parents, partly because they tend to have more leisure time. "But it's also because white parents simply like meetings more," said Larry Wells, former director of the Experimental Schools Project. "Minority parents are more than willing to let someone run a school so long as the kids are learning."

The Massachusetts Experimental School System (see page 26) had a slightly different experience. Although the program is supposed to be a statewide model school, most of the students come from the immediate community, which is predominantly black. "The white parents used to be of two basic varieties," said Steve Shaw, acting director of the project, "hippies who wanted cool, beautiful things to happen and suburban professionals and academics who enrolled their kids for a year or two to have an 'experience' and then pulled them out. Now we're getting a much more stable white contingent who bring their kids here to grow and get a good education."

The Massachusetts program consists of an elementary school, a junior high, and a high school. Each school is governed by a board of parents, students, staff, and community members. The teachers try to visit homes regularly, but the parents are involved very little. The project is trying to engage parents by using them as evaluators who come in and observe the school. "The parents see things that professional evaluators don't see," says Shaw. "Parents come in and say, 'OK, I understand what you're doing, but how come my kid can't read?' It keeps the teachers on their toes."

Only in a limited sense is the Massachusetts Experimental School System a community school system. "It's taken as much time as we've been in existence to get the state to accept the notion of community participation," said Shaw. The boards of each school have full control over hiring, but all teachers are paid as state employees. All fiscal policy decisions, such as budgetary allocations, are handled through the State Department of Education.

Park East in New York, on the other hand, is the creation of the Committee for a Comprehensive Education Center (CCEC), a community-based, nonprofit educational corporation that administers funds and programs for a new high school being built by the city Board of Education. Park East, a pilot high school of approximately 475 students, serves two communities: East Harlem (poor Puerto Rican and black) and Yorkville (poor, rich, middle-class ethnic, and mostly white). The new high school is located at the boundary between the two communities.

As with other community-controlled schools, the parents involved in CCEC have made their most valuable contributions through hiring and evaluation. Parents have a major voice in staffing and constantly prod the school for results. Most parents are not concerned about day-to-day issues such as reading programs or the best way to organize a vocational education project. They are heavily involved in moments of crisis. "If it looks like somebody on the outside is trying to do the project in," said former CCEC director Byron Stookey, "everybody will get in the act. And it still works to march on City Hall."

"This project was never a hustle in the sense that somebody was trying to use the school for personal gain or political leverage," said Stookey. "Parents aren't going to take that when it comes to their children's education." His statement could also apply to the East Harlem Block Schools, the Morgan School, or the Boston Federation Schools.

Growing an Alternative School

How alternative schools grow makes a big difference in how they work. A school that emerges in response to a specific need, and thus knows exactly what it wants to be alternative *to*, generally works better than a school that is mandated to "be an alternative school." Too often, well-meaning individuals or school districts are tempted to introduce alternatives by the possibility of soliciting public or foundation dollars. Sometimes alternative schools are initiated by district superintendents who want to be "progressive" or in step with education's latest vogue.

For the teachers, students, and administrators involved, alternatives handed down from above can be bitterly disappointing. Given *carte blanche* to experiment, people too often formulate grandiose plans. When reality confronts rhetoric, the plans tend to fall apart. Teachers often find themselves unprepared and untrained for the many demands of experimentation. Students and their parents may feel that they are being used. Lacking the deep personal commitment by participants to alternatives that arise from specific needs, top-down alternatives rarely survive the turmoil of experimentation. They either phase out or become indistinguishable from the traditional system.

Alternatives implemented by mandate can, however, involve teachers, students, and parents who otherwise might never take an interest in experimentation. Willingly or reluctantly, they are forced to take a new look at the process of education and the business of running a school. The complexities of planning curricula, training teachers, and selecting (and often devising) materials usually are tough enough to jar people into thinking seriously about education.

Other questions that arise about alternative schools are whether they should be big or small and whether they should develop all at once or a little at a time. Almost all sound alternative school programs have chosen to remain small, even if their original plans called for expansion. Small alternatives instill in the people involved in them feelings of pride and ownership that large alternative programs often lack.

All alternatives have growing pains. Alternatives often start out very loosely structured, then swing back into overly traditional methods until they feel safe enough to renew experimentation. It takes time to adjust an alternative to the needs of a community. Small alternatives have room to make mistakes. Larger ones often fail before they have a chance to experiment at all.

Many Ways

When the school desegregation buses started rolling in Berkeley in 1968, the small storefront where the movement had been planned was vacated. Teacher-author Herb Kohl moved in with a group of teachers to start a teacher-training and curriculum-development center. When some students tried to break into the center, Kohl welcomed them inside. Soon they brought their friends. Other students met Kohl through courses he was teaching in a Berkeley junior high school and began coming to the storefront. Some came to get away from the schools, others just to fool around. But Kohl soon had almost everything he needed for a school—teachers, a site, and 100 students from the seventh through the twelfth grades. Kohl presented the evidence to the Berkeley school board, and he was hired as principal of an alternative school dubbed Other Ways.

Soon thereafter, a group of teachers from Other Ways joined with some other students and opened a multicultural junior high program called Odyssey, which the board also recognized as a school. Now the schools had everything but money. Within a few months, the Foundation granted funds to assist six small home-grown alternative schools in Berkeley.

About one year after Kohl started Other Ways,

Students at Odyssey, an alternative public junior high school in Berkeley, select their own materials for their regular reading class.

the Berkeley school district was chosen by the U.S. Office of Education as the site of one of three national Experimental School Programs. The Berkeley experiment was to be funded for $3.6 million for the first two and a half years (a total of $7 million over six years) and was to involve more than one-fourth of all the children enrolled in the public schools. The Office of Education gave Berkeley thirty days to submit a proposal, thirty days to revise it, and only three months to set up eighteen alternative schools. Proposals were put together so hastily that one of the planned alternatives was named "anonymous."

The alternative school movement in Berkeley changed almost overnight from a grassroots effort into a big business. A bureaucracy was created quickly. "We have a lot of people now who know about writing proposals," said Larry Wells, Experimental Schools' Program director. "At first we didn't think all that time writing reports was important, but it is. It's a reality." Things got worse when the federal program moved from the Office of Education to the research-oriented National Institute of Education (NIE). "We became a research project," said Wells. "Now we have to set down everything for five years in advance—what you're going to do, who's going to do it, how you're going to evaluate it." At the end of the grant period, Berkeley will have to decide which programs it will support with its own funds and which ones it will drop.

The Berkeley experience provides some insights into what works and what doesn't work in alternative schools. The overnight necessity to set up the schools produced great diversity but also fostered much distrust. Minority parents were wary of the new creations. A massive information program was implemented in churches, homes, and schools to explain what the alternatives were trying to accomplish. However, establishing trust is slow and difficult.

About half of the teachers in the Experimental Schools Program are certified, but they need more training and they know it. The programs that have worked best have been the most structured. "But that's not always good. The tendency is to become very defensive," said Wells. "You feel you have to justify everything you do. People start out with grand humanistic ideas and get into terrible and unhumanistic conflicts over how to implement them. You have to keep reassuring people: 'So something doesn't work. Let's try something else.' You have to keep telling them that it's all right to fail."

Some of the new ideas were unrealistic, and the experiments began to return to traditional methods. Many of the alternatives also relied on standardized tests to measure their progress. The results were disappointing; no overnight miracles occurred. According to Richard Foster, the former superintendent of schools, alternatives needed to discover things that standardized tests couldn't find out—such as the school factors (excessive rules, for example) that interfere with learning.

For people like Herb Kohl, the experimental schools were never genuine alternatives because they were directed to grow from the top down. For other people, however, the program has proved that it is possible for a traditional system and alternatives to coexist. The Experimental Schools Program gave many people, especially parents, an education in the workings of the Berkeley Unified School District. Richard Foster says the alternative schools program has increased parental participation in the system, and released staff to do creative work they didn't know they were capable of. Most important, the alternatives have restored some of the lost faith that education could change at all. "Before the alternatives," said Foster, "a lot of kids were just taking off. They were hitting the road saying, 'The hell with it. There's nothing here for me.' I rarely hear that anymore."

Ethnic Alternatives

Most of Berkeley's alternative schools have some ethnic or multiethnic focus. Several of these programs were assisted by the Foundation: Odyssey, a multiracial junior high school; Black House and Casa de la Raza, schools geared to the needs of blacks and Chicanos, respectively; Equal One, and Other Ways. Other Ways originated as an integrated school but took on a heavy ethnic emphasis when it was reorganized and renamed for the leader of the black separatist back-to-Africa movement of the 1920s, Marcus Garvey. In the wake of a recent Office of Civil Rights ruling prohibiting racially segregated schools (even all-black schools segregated by choice), the Marcus Garvey Institute again changed its name to United Nations West and began recruiting white students. Garvey's program was known more for its racial exclusiveness than for the soundness of its academic or cultural curriculum, however, and recruiting has not been successful.

The main targets in the Office of Civil Rights' action against the Berkeley Experimental Schools Program were Black House and Casa de la Raza. The OCR's standard for compliance specified that students could spend no more than 25 per cent of the school day in a segregated setting. During the summer of 1973, the leaders of Black House and Casa decided to close rather than compromise their view, which is, simply stated, that the victims of segregation, like the victims of other tragedies, have special needs which can be met only through special programs.

The avowed purpose of Black House was to give black students the self-discipline and responsibility which its founders believed integrated public schools had failed to provide. "Most public high schools are notorious for treating their students as if they were much younger than their fifteen to seventeen years," said Black House director Horace Upshaw. "When it comes to black students, the public school teachers are especially lethargic. They don't expect much from black kids, are condescending toward them, and pretty much allow them to do what they please." At Black House, no student could use his blackness as an excuse for being irresponsible toward his academic obligations.

Black House never had a long waiting list, partly because of the reluctance of Berkeley's black parents to accept alternative programs. "The parents think if it's an alternative, it has to be doing something wrong," said Upshaw. "They think their kids are going to run wild." Then Black House began to have trouble recruiting students for precisely the opposite reason: it was too traditional and too hard. Many students were surprised to find themselves being asked to honor commitments as if they were adults.

At the end of the 1972-73 school year, Black House had sixteen staff members and seventy-five students in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades. With Foundation assistance, Black House was able to rent its own site in Berkeley's industrial district—in an environment, said Upshaw, that was related to their background.

The mood inside Black House was never militantly ethnic. Black House did teach courses in black survival, including how to handle cases in small claims court, prepare cheap meals, deal with job applications. Courses were also offered in the political geography of third-world nations, black culture, the role of black women, and other ethnic-oriented subjects. The bulk of the curriculum, however, centered on basic skills.

Casa de la Raza made its home first in a series of old wooden shacks behind a junior high school. On the rough walls the students painted brightly colored revolutionary scenes and slogans as well as the usual school graffiti: "Antony con Maria" "Sandra con Michael." Casa's three-year history was turbulent. It is summed up by the students' own comments in the school's yearbook:

When Casa first started, it wasn't very much together. We had no toilets, water, and the walls were dull. I guess some people just decided to paint so they got it together and started painting everything. The students of Casa took advantage of the freeness of the school. This year I don't know why it changed but I myself think it helped the students get serious and not mess around anymore. I really like Casa. I think the kids that left made a big mistake. (Gilbert Guerro, Grade 8)

Casa finally became a warm, child-centered, family-style bilingual school for 100 kindergarten-through-twelfth graders run by a student-parent-teacher governing board. In 1972, Casa moved out of its shacks into a series of trailers nearby. Casa based its educational philosophy on the premise that if Chicano children were given the opportunity to learn in a culturally relevant context, they would learn at the same rate as their Anglo counterparts. "The parents wanted their kids to be Chicano, not hippie," said Casa director Francisco Hernandez. "Chicano kids have a constitutional right to a good education. And if they can't get it in a regular public school, then they have a right to their own school. You have schools for the deaf and the blind. Chicano kids have special needs too."

The Foundation granted Casa de la Raza funds for teacher training to develop a bicultural curriculum. Hernandez believes that many tenets of education may not apply with equal validity to children of different racial backgrounds. Nobody knows if Piaget's theories of child development apply to Chicano children because nobody has tried to find out. Most teachers learn about Chicanos in schools of education where they study them under the headings of compensatory education and special education. "The message," says Hernandez, "is 'how to deal with these stupid children.' We have to get the idea out of the teachers' heads that the kids are disadvantaged. They're just different."

Casa de la Raza was in its new trailers for less than a year before it was closed down. The Berkeley school board decided against challenging the Office of Civil Rights ruling to close Casa de la Raza and Black House for fear of losing federal funds. However, the children from Casa tended to follow their old Casa teachers into the regular public schools. In fact, Casa's new "enrollment" has expanded somewhat by the addition of students whose parents had liked the program before but had kept away because of the inadequate facilities. Hernandez hopes to raise enough money to keep at least some parts of the program intact, including a cultural center for parents, a teacher-training unit, a center for the development of bicultural materials, and an extended-day cultural program for children.

Equal One, a new Berkeley alternative created by Kathryne Favors, director of the human relations department for the Berkeley public schools, separates children into ethnic groups for a few hours a week for work related to their ethnic heritage. Parents of 200 fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-graders volunteered to have them meet together so that they can speak freely among themselves about the difficulties they experience in a multiracial world. An example is the difference in feeling if called a derogatory ethnic name by someone in one's own ethnic group as against the same name coming from an outsider. One independent study project for the black students was discussing the historical significance of the film "Sounder" and the contemporary problems it depicts. They planned lessons around the film, including reading and social studies.

The principal of Equal One, Jesse Anthony, believes that differences between black and white children go far beyond color, language or heritage. "When white kids get into junior high school," says Anthony, "they tend to stay in the classroom and miss out on a lot of the total school experience. They don't survive as well in gangs or cliques. The black kids suffer academically and miss out on the classroom experience. So we try to get the white kids into the social thing and the black kids into the

In addition to basic studies such as English, social studies, and mathematics, these "mini-school" students at Haaren High School in New York City experiment in three-dimensional design.

intellectual thing." Most of the reading materials at Equal One deal directly with human relations in some way. They are expensive, but this year the Berkeley school system allocated $45,000 to continue Equal One after its two-year Foundation grant had run out.

Chapter 808

One way to establish an alternative school is by law. A Massachusetts legislative act of 1967 (Chapter 808) authorized an experimental educational laboratory which might include "no more than three experimental school projects." Chapter 808 was hailed as a great breakthrough. The Massachusetts Experimental School System (MESS) is the only state-funded school of its kind in the country. The Ford Foundation granted $390,000 over five years to the Committee for Community Education Development (CCED) for planning the project.

This year, the Massachusetts Experimental School System serves some 350 children, most of whom are in the elementary grades. There is also an eighty-five-student middle school and a high school of about sixty students. The schools are located in the largely black Roxbury and Dorchester sections of Boston. The curriculum in the lower school is two-pronged. Children of different ages and races meet together in a homeroom where they eat breakfast and lunch, leave for trips, and generally establish a home base. Through such a family-style group the schools seek to develop close sibling-like relations between the children. In the high school, a study group seeks to accomplish the same goals on a more advanced level.

The cognitive side of the curriculum is taught in resource areas such as language arts, creative arts, natural science, and social science that are used by all age groups in the school. Teachers are selected by a personnel committee of one staff member, one community board member, and at least one parent. The teachers are paid as state employees.

The most successful part of the Massachusetts project has been the lower school. Its open structure is intended to prepare the student gradually for taking responsibility for himself. By the time he is in high school, he is in a school-without-walls situation almost all the time. The high school makes extensive use of student-written contracts and internships.

The Massachusetts Experimental School System was established as a model for other school systems in the state, but ever since it opened it has been under fire from both outside agencies and from its patron, the State of Massachusetts. The program has been criticized for lack of structure and planning. Changes in administration have been frequent. The program also is very expensive, partly because MESS has little discretionary power over allocation of funds. That is, MESS cannot choose to hire lower-paid paraprofessionals instead of state-certified teachers to bring down its pupil/teacher ratio.

The program has not yet made a substantial impact on other schools in Massachusetts, partly because it has had little time for thinking about much else than survival. It has had four homes in four years. Only in 1973 did the high school finally obtain permanent facilities in a converted supermarket in Dorchester. The State Department of Education, which nominally operates the Experimental School System, has conducted many evaluations, but the project finds itself in the confusing position of being a state school in which the state involvement is minimal, and at the same time trying to be a community-oriented school. Legally, all decision-making power at MESS is in the hands of the state. However, day-to-day decisions are made by the executive director and the community board. "The legislation was passed during a period when getting involved in the urban scene was fashionable," said Steve Shaw, the acting director of MESS. "Now it's no longer fashionable. State sup-

port has been erratic, to say the least." Also, the schools are supposed to be a racially balanced metropolitan entity, but because they are located in predominately black communities school enrollments have remained largely black.

Despite these drawbacks, Shaw considers MESS's position in the public school system advantageous. "If you're in the business of changing public schools," he says, "you can't remain in isolation. You have to be in the public sector to make an impact." Shaw believes that what MESS needs today is research and dissemination of ideas so that other school systems can make use of what has been learned at the experimental schools. Recently, MESS launched what Shaw described as a "successful diplomatic offensive" to revive state interest in the project. The Commissioner of Education and other state officials visited the schools. With a little more state interest and money, Shaw thinks that the Massachusetts Experimental School System could become a "first-rate educational laboratory for the entire state."

Mini-Schools: Everything at Once

Haaren High School, on the west side of New York City, has an enrollment of about 2,000 students, only 200 of whom read on grade level. Almost 85 per cent read at least two years below grade level. One disgruntled assistant principal described Haaren as a school for vocational high school rejects. In the spring of 1970, when the school was beset by high dropout and truancy rates, low morale, poor relations between staff and students, and a rigid academic structure, Haaren's principal, Bernard Deutchman, and the New York Urban Coalition agreed to join in an effort to establish twelve mini-schools within Haaren. A staff vote was taken and the project was approved by the teachers by a margin of 60-40. It also was approved by the Board of Education.

Classrooms were ripped out to make lounges for informal discussions. Mini-schools—self-contained units within the larger school, each enrolling 150 to 200 students—were set up to reduce hall traffic, offer options, increase intimacy and improve teacher-student relations. The mini-school options include English as a second language, High School Equivalency Careers, Pre-Tech, Mobil Automotive, Aviation, Correlated Curriculum, Senior, College Bound, and Special Education. "Mobil Automotive," for example, enables a student to learn about the management of a service station. The Mobil Oil Company constructed a simulated gas station on the second floor of the high school and trained the staff. However, most of the mini-schools are compensatory or basic education programs.

The Ford Foundation granted $200,000 for the Haaren experiment, including a pilot program to train and support a staff of streetworkers who live in the same communities as the Haaren students and help bridge the gap between the students and the educational bureaucracy. The streetworkers, young men in their twenties, at least two-thirds of whom have completed some postsecondary education, also help with academic and social problems. Each mini-school has at least one streetworker. In 1972, the streetworkers became employees of the New York City Board of Education—"a real milestone," said the Urban Coalition's Calvin Ramsey.

According to one assistant principal, the mini-school idea was fine in theory but hasn't worked in practice. "The kids in the aviation school, for example, have never been near a plane and the teachers haven't been to an airport in years," he said. "Some of those kids can't even use a ruler. But we are still beholden to the New York State Board of Regents and those kids have to pass a math exam." But his complaint is countered by teachers and administrators who feel that learning math in the context of aviation is effective even without airport visits. They say it is naive to expect

a smoothly run program to be implemented even in three years in one of the worst high schools in New York City.

After three years, Haaren is by no means a model program. However, morale is up, hall traffic is down, and student-teacher relations are warmer. Many teachers have become excited about the project and are getting involved in curriculum planning for the first time. In addition, the mini-schools have allowed each student to spend most of his time with a few teachers instead of shuffling around from teacher to teacher throughout his entire high school career. Many students have developed loyalties to these small units.

Grass Roots Planning

When the New York City Board of Education builds a new school, it generally picks a site and presents ready-made plans to the public. But in 1965 when the board announced it would build a new high school on the site of the old Ruppert Brewery on East 94th Street, residents of Yorkville and East Harlem saw a chance to become involved in shaping their new school. At first, they were primarily interested in facilities. Was the school going to be air-conditioned? Would it have a swimming pool? Soon, however, they formed a Committee for a Comprehensive Education Center and began to talk with the board about educational programs. In 1969, the committee acquired an office and a paid clerical staff. They made ambitious plans, calling for a high school of 4,000 students divided into mini-schools or teams of 150-200 students each. The high school was to include both academic and vocational studies. There was to be community participation, community internships for students and adult programs.

The plans remained abstractions until CCEC proposed that the Ruppert Education Center (or Park East High School, as the board called it) implement a pilot mini-school of 150 students, to test out programs and ideas instead of waiting for the new school to be built. The Ford Foundation committed $180,000 for planning and operating funds for the first eighteen months of the pilot program. A temporary site was found in the basement of St. Cecelia's Church. The students helped to remodel the facilities, joining with parents and teachers to pour cement, hammer, plaster, and paint.

From the beginning, CCEC was careful to establish close ties with city agencies and community groups. It gained the support of the United Federation of Teachers, which was vital to a strong community role in teacher hiring. "We insisted that the board of education be involved at every point," said former CCEC director Stookey. "The best way for the board to get rid of us would be to pat us on the head and say 'that's nice' and leave us alone so we'd quietly disappear. But we tried to make it very clear all along that Ruppert was a part of the New York City school system, not another freaky private school." Two years after the pilot program opened, Park East became part of the public system.

With CCEC as the fiscal agent for school funds, Park East enjoys much more autonomy than it would if the school had to deal with the board directly. The committee handles matters which the school staff lacks either the sophistication or energy to take on. CCEC raises funds, acts as a liaison between the school and the community, and stays on top of political negotiations with the board of education.

Park East's aim is not to become an alternative school for special students but to serve as a model of a truly comprehensive high school that leaves the maximum number of options open to all students at all levels. Although New York has had comprehensive high schools for many years, most students are tracked into vocational or academic programs. Few vocational students ever return to academic studies while students in academic high

schools graduate with few business skills and little knowledge of the working world. At Park East, all of the students must take at least some vocational courses.

The school is open from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., and all courses are open to adults as well as school-age students. Some adults attend during the day, and some students attend at night. This year, Park East enrolls 475 students, including seventy-five adults. The evenly distributed racial background of the students reflects that of East Harlem and Yorkville. Both staff and students are involved in recruiting students, from both public and private schools.

Of the first forty-seven students graduated from Park East in 1973, thirty went on to college.

Park East's curriculum strongly emphasizes both traditional skills and personal growth. The teachers developed a curriculum in emotional growth—using many of the techniques of the human potential movement—that is required for all students. The school also offers survival training, based on the Outward Bound wilderness program, which begins in the subways and parks and continues in the woods. Courses range from strategies for getting high marks on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) to computer programming, supermarket cashier checking, and first aid. Social studies range from the women's movement to Afro-American history and surveys of Japan, China, and the Middle East. One course examines contemporary problems such as pornography, divorce, overpopulation, violence, and crime. Each student is required to participate in a community internship.

Most alternative school programs require teachers who can wear many hats, but Park East is working on ways to solve the problem by giving teachers a lighter load. "You can't build a school on the assumption that it will run only if every teacher is outstanding," said Joe Krevisky, the school's deputy director. "So we try not to force our teachers to excel in every area."

CCEC rather than the school conducts outreach programs in community health, drug and abortion referral, job counseling, religious counseling, and contacts with social and welfare agents. CCEC also operates an early learning center in the high school. During 1972-73, it enrolled thirty pre-schoolers who were taught by four student teachers from Park East and one professional.

A group home is being acquired for students who have no place to live. For a while, some students had been living with teachers. The students are often referred by disciplinary agencies and foster homes in New York City.

"The people who created this project wanted to see if this kind of thing could work in the public school system," said Krevisky. "The movement for experimentation isn't as strong now as it was a few years ago, but it's caught on enough so that even the most conservative kinds of people are planning alternatives in almost every high school in New York City."

Survival

The long-term solution to the question of survival for most alternative schools is public funding. For all practical purposes that means becoming part of a local public school system. Most viable alternative schools today are incorporated into their local public schools.

In most states, all public schools must abide by regulations about curricula, attendance, budgets, and teacher hiring practices. Both teachers' organizations and local and state regulations impose additional requirements on the operation of schools. Yet alternative public school systems are generally recognized as "experimental" schools which are exempted from many state and local regulations, at least temporarily.

Whether the restrictions placed on public alternatives hinder the operation of the schools depends on the flexibility of teachers' organizations and of local and state educational authorities. For example, community schools which involve a high degree of parent involvement in teacher selection almost invariably find it difficult to function within the public system. Also, parents who teach in community schools are rarely state-certified teachers, which places such schools in direct conflict with teachers' organizations.

Other kinds of public alternatives find it easier to adjust to the restrictions. They may use state-certified teachers but retain some control over which teachers they hire. Or they may use a mix of state-certified teachers, paraprofessionals, university interns, and street workers. Most alternative schools have pupil-teacher ratios below those found in traditional schools. To keep costs comparable, they must either find a way to pay some teachers less than negotiated salary scales or to trade off facilities and materials to pay prevailing salaries. In their curricula, alternatives generally find a way to meet state requirements without excessively altering their programs.

While some educators feel that only public alternatives can have an impact on the public system, others contend that public alternatives cannot provide genuine options because of the restrictions imposed on public schools. For some private alternative schools such questions are truly academic. The alternatives to public funding are foundation and federal grants, which expire, and local fund-raising efforts such as bake sales and private donations, which rarely yield enough.

Some alternative schools have initiated experiments in public-private cooperation which would entitle them to public funds without requiring that they become part of the public school system. Thus, the East Harlem Block Schools plan to provide training for public school teachers. Yet even these arrangements provide only stop-gap funding until the political climate is such that the schools can be incorporated into the public system without losing their uniqueness.

Going Public

"Here she is! Miss Boston University!" a group of students shout as their friend walks into the headmaster's office at Harlem Preparatory School. Miss B.U., a former New York City high school dropout, twirls around to show off her new self. Another young former student brought her baby girl with her to school because she could not afford a baby-sitter. Until a year ago, she was working at the telephone company—bored, scared, with no real future for either her or her child. Now she is attending college.

Harlem Prep is a school for dropouts: for the American Indian girl who was told she didn't have enough credits to graduate from public school. ("I got tired of taking courses I didn't like, like home economics, instead of courses I needed to graduate. So I hit the streets. Then somebody told me about Harlem Prep.") Or the aspiring journalist who couldn't convince her former school that she didn't want to become a nurse. Or Ron, a dropout from

At Harlem Prep teachers and students use a variety of approaches to develop students' ideas and relate subjects to their experience. In informal classes students may work alone, in groups, or even teach their classmates.

three New York City public high schools. ("I needed help and guidance from the teachers, but they didn't have time for that. They were the educators and we were just the students. Here, we all teach and we all learn. There's a reason for everything you have to do.") Ron graduated from Cornell in May 1972 and entered graduate school.

In central Harlem alone, some 1,000 teenagers drop out of school every month. "I figured there must be some out of that number who could enter and complete college," says the headmaster of Harlem Prep, Ed Carpenter, a former counselor in a New York City public high school. Harlem Prep opened in October 1967 with forty-nine students and nine faculty members. In 1968, the school moved into its permanent site in an abandoned supermarket. The atmosphere is open and informal. Students and teachers stay after school and have a voice in picking courses and in running the school. But when it comes to learning, Harlem Prep is structured and strict. Teachers take attendance, give homework, and grade students in a traditional way.

To be admitted to Harlem Prep, a student must be at least sixteen years old and able to read at the seventh grade level. Thus, only highly capable students are admitted to Harlem Prep in the first place, even though they are all public school dropouts. Students can be of any race, nationality, or religion. The maximum period of enrollment is two years. To graduate from Harlem Prep, a student must be admitted to a college or university—and 99 per cent do go on to college. For most students, this means getting a full scholarship as well as being accepted. Since its inception in 1967, Harlem Prep has sent 731 former dropouts to college.

Harlem Prep's students are morally obligated to "enter and complete college and return to serve the Harlems throughout the nation." The goals of maximizing service and minimizing materialism are built into the curriculum. "Our students are the have-nots who are going to become the haves—with compassion," Carpenter says. Of Harlem Prep's twenty-five college graduates, several are attending graduate, medical, and law schools, several are teachers, two are writers, two work in government agencies, and four are back at Harlem Prep as teachers.

"This is a school that produces—that sends kids to college, that reduces welfare rolls, that cuts down on narcotics problems, that generates taxes," says Carpenter. "It's profitable for everyone." But Harlem Prep has not been profitable for itself. Since the school opened, it has been funded by the Ford and Exxon Foundations, Carnegie Corporation, hundreds of corporate grants, and literally thousands of individual contributors. But private funds finally were not enough.

In August 1973 Harlem Prep's board of directors decided to close the school down. But the teachers and administrators voted to stay on with no pay. Some collected unemployment compensation instead. A massive campaign was mounted by the board of directors and by various contributors and politicians who had supported Harlem Prep over the years to persuade the New York City Board of Education to fund the school. The effort was ultimately successful. As of May 1974, Harlem Prep was still negotiating with the Board of Education over such technical matters as teacher certification requirements, but public funding has begun for the entire program.

What public funding will mean to Harlem Prep in the future is uncertain. The board is trying to certify most of the school's present staff, but two teachers without college degrees will not be eligible. However, the agreement with the board will allow Harlem Prep to solicit outside funds, which could pay for uncertified personnel, and since Harlem Prep went public the Exxon Education Foundation has granted $25,000.

Ed Carpenter isn't too worried about losing teachers under the new arrangement. He is worried

about constraints on curricula, the number of hours teachers will be allowed to work, and the scheduling of meetings according to union contract. But, noting that public school alternatives have been allowed to retain their individuality, Ed Carpenter says, "I can't really say what will happen, but I'm encouraged."

Quid Pro Quo

One possible long-range solution to the problem of funding private alternatives may lie in cooperative programs with a public school system. In September 1972, the Hawthorne School in Washington, D.C., a private high school with a reputation for innovation, enrolled forty-one public school students. The students were chosen by lottery—three from each high school and one from each vocational school in the city. In return, Hawthorne, then on the verge of closing for lack of funds, was granted the use of an old public school building.

Annual tuition for regular Hawthorne students is $1,950, and many have scholarships. Since the public school system couldn't pay the cost of educating the forty-one students, it agreed to let Hawthorne use public school resources such as athletic facilities, counselling services, vocational equipment, and field trips. "But since we wouldn't normally pay for field trips and athletics anyway," said headmaster Alexander Orr, "the arrangement really isn't of any financial use to us." The Ford Founda-

Whether schools are conventional or alternative, graduation is special. At the Hawthorne School in Washington students consider the appeal of the traditional symbols of commencement.

tion granted $31,000 to make up the deficit and to fund a documentation of the three-year project.

"We decided that the best way to help big city education was to make ourselves directly available to the public system," said Eleanor Orr, headmistress of Hawthorne. "We can respond to the need for change faster. We can constantly revise our curriculum. Public school systems have a certain regimented character and there will always be some kids who don't fit there."

At first Hawthorne experienced serious attendance problems with the public school transfers. "The public school kids never saw the connection between being in class and passing," said Mrs. Orr. "In public school, their teachers ignored them. Here, the teachers follow them around. It was hard to get used to." Fourteen transfers returned to public school because Hawthorne was too difficult.

Last year Hawthorne enrolled a total of 120 students. Twenty-four of its forty-one public school students were black. It was the first year that the school enrolled more black students than white students. Hawthorne now faces a serious public relations problem to persuade white tuition-paying parents that Hawthorne still has high academic standards. While as many white families applied to Hawthorne as ever this year, a far smaller percentage decided to enroll their children after they had visited the school. "The parents are frightened," said Eleanor Orr. "They think, 'How can you bring in all those public school kids and still offer quality education?'"

Still, many private alternative schools are in financial trouble. They will have to seek some kind of help to face up to their role vis-à-vis public schools, especially with the proliferation of public alternatives. Eleanor Orr would like to see a system of tuition grants to public school students who need help could take advantage of private alternative school programs: "The best thing would be if the whole city were a set of alternative schools."

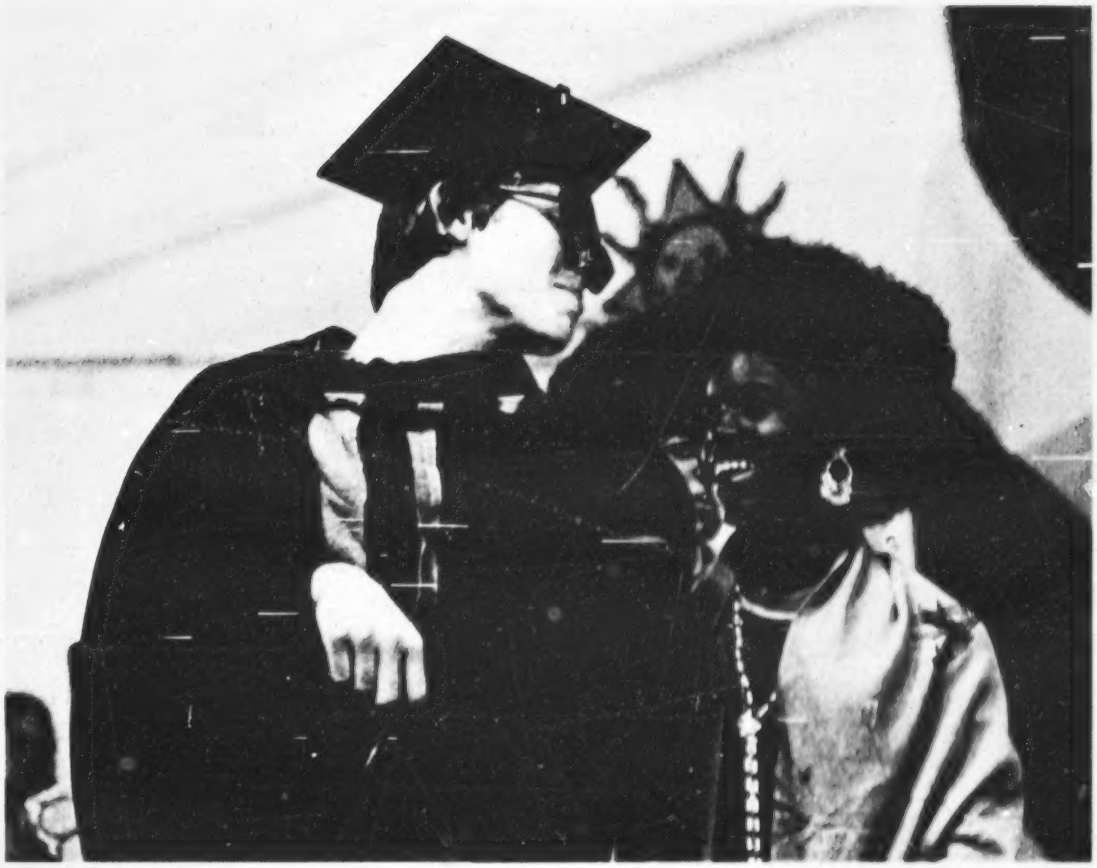
Prospects

If the kids have to go back to public school, it will bring about the same situation that spawned the Federation in the first place. But I don't think it could have the same result. These people are tired. They've struggled for seven years to make some kind of change, and the conditions in the Boston public schools haven't changed at all. They're still terrible. Perhaps even more important, while the schools stayed the same, the situation in this community got worse. Federal cutbacks for Model Cities and other programs have turned a poor community into a destitute one. The parents are less and less interested in the schools and more concerned with day-to-day problems of survival. At this point, education becomes an abstraction.

—Philip Hart
Federation of Boston Community Schools

Conditions at many levels of education discourage the growth of alternative school programs. In many school districts lay boards as well as professional administrators maintain rigidities in curriculum, organization of the school day, the rules governing student behavior. Regulations at the state level often impose another ring of restraints—on what is taught, who may teach, and how teaching may be done, and some union contract provisions hamper the flexibility that is central to the spirit of alternatives. Yet as several projects discussed in this report indicate, there are important exceptions; in various parts of the country the initiative for alternative schools has been taken by professional educators, state education officials, and teacher union leaders as well as by parents and community leaders.

There is much less public support now for reforming inner-city schools than during the "urban crisis" a few years ago. Alternative education, both public and private, is in danger of becoming regarded as a fad—a simplified panacea one day, an expendable experiment the next. If this happens, the Boston Federation will become one of the first victims. The hope that public school systems or federal or state agencies would assume the costs of private alternative programs is no longer as bright as it was several years ago.



The major obstacle to survival of the private alternative schools is financial: they lack endowment, students who can pay tuition, and wealthy alumni. Also, no matter how effective alternative private schools are, the majority of students will continue to attend public schools; the most realistic hope for the survival of most private alternatives is to be folded into a public system without their essential features being diluted.

In the case of alternatives within public school systems, the constraints are not wholly financial. In the beginning, the creation of alternative programs in the public sector required funds for planning, development, training, and, in the case of the pioneering alternatives (e.g., Parkway, City-as-School), some operating costs. Hence, the need then for support from foundations, corporations, and specialized federal aid, such as the Experimental Schools Program. Now that alternatives are no longer a novelty, and there are good alternatives operating in almost all regions of the country, start-up costs to demonstrate the concept are usually not necessary. Many of the alternative programs in the public schools cost almost the same per pupil as traditional programs. The many alternative programs in the Philadelphia Public Schools, for example, are required to cost out at no more than the average level of per pupil expenditure in the city. Publicly financed school alternatives that are designed for low-income neighborhoods can and do employ, as some do already, Federal Title I (Elementary and Secondary Education Act) funds earmarked for disadvantaged students as readily as they can use them for regular school programs. Similarly, alternative programs for very young children can use public funds earmarked for child care.

The Ford Foundation has concluded its support of private alternatives and will shortly be concluding its support of alternatives created within public school systems. The point has been made that alternatives are necessary and can work educationally. Whether they continue and multiply now depends more on school systems' own initiatives than on external assistance.

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